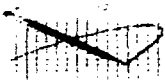


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Mick Hans/R5/USEPA/US

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To

Subject Kazoo clips #2 w/BNA

Here are the update story from today's Kalamazoo Gazette and the BNA Daily Environment Report coverage.

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Kalamazoo River cleanup gets moving

Thursday, March 01, 2007

By Chris Killian
Special to the Gazette

PLAINWELL -- A \$21 million cleanup to remove pollutants from the Kalamazoo River will begin in April. At a press conference Wednesday, officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources provided details about a project to remove thousands of pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, from a 1.5-mile section of the Kalamazoo River upstream from the Plainwell Dam. Part of the dam also will be removed. An 80-mile stretch of the waterway was declared a Superfund site in 1990.

Two paper-manufacturing companies -- Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Millennium Holdings Inc. -- have agreed to clean up that stretch of river.

The waste will be removed, laid out on "de-watering pads" to dry, and loaded on trucks. The trucks will make 20 to 30 trips daily to the Allied Paper Inc. landfill in Kalamazoo, where the waste will be dumped.

Depending on the level of PCBs present, land at least 30 feet and as far as 150 feet from the riverbank will be cleaned, and excavated areas will be reclaimed with native vegetation.

The work will run through December 2008, with breaks during the winter months. A stretch of the river from the Plainwell Dam to just west of downtown Plainwell will be closed to boaters during the project.

"This is a significant step forward in terms of improving the river and the area," said Sam Borries, on-scene coordinator for the EPA.

The 123-mile-long river bisects the city of Kalamazoo and meanders through Allegan en route to Saugatuck, where it empties into Lake Michigan. The government says paper mills and manufacturing plants, most of which no longer are in business, fouled the river for decades with their industrial wastes.

Officials met behind closed doors with representatives from Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Millennium Holdings for nearly three years to hash out the cleanup arrangement.

One agreement requires companies to pay an estimated \$21 million for the cleanup. A second agreement mandates the companies also pay \$15 million for more study of possible PCB hot spots throughout the 80-mile stretch. The EPA will provide \$3 million in funding.

Stephen Hamilton, president of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, said the council questioned the lack of public input during the negotiation process. The council also protested the need for more study, saying the need was "unclear."

Saugatuck resident Dayle Harrison, an environmentalist who has been advocating for the river's cleanup for more than 30 years, called the agreements "woefully inadequate."

Harrison, president of the Kalamazoo River Protection Association, said between 225,000 and 250,000 pounds of PCBs lie within about 5 million cubic yards of sediment that needs to be removed from the river and its flood plains.

"We don't need another \$15 million of studies on the river," he said. "We know where all the contamination is, where it is in the wildlife, where it is in the fish. We need to get the contamination cleaned up now to restore this beautiful resource."

Once the work is completed, 88 percent of the PCBs will have been removed from the site. The remaining 12 percent will be tested to determine if any human or animal threat is posed.

Groundwater wells will be installed east of the site to monitor possible PCB leeching. It will take two years for data to be gathered from the wells and four to five years for the EPA to certify the site as clean.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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News

Superfund

Georgia-Pacific, Millennium Holdings Reach Pact With EPA on Kalamazoo River Cleanup

LANSING, Mich.--Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Millennium Holdings agreed to spend \$21 million to clean up a portion of the Kalamazoo River, and to perform about \$15 million worth of additional sampling and investigation, the Environmental Protection Agency said Feb. 28.

The companies plan to remove 4,400 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from a 1.5-mile stretch of the river over two years, EPA said. The project targets riverbanks, in-stream sediment, and floodplain hot spots primarily located on state-owned land, EPA said. The companies will hire contractors to perform the work, while EPA, in consultation with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, will oversee the job.

"Today's announcement is a milestone in our efforts to address this legacy of contamination," MDEQ Director Steven Chester said. The area, a federal superfund site, is contaminated as a result of paper milling dating back to the early 1900s, an EPA spokesman said.

EPA Region 5 Administrator Mary Gade called the agreement "an important step forward." The cleanup, she said, is "real progress toward recovery of the Kalamazoo River system."

The Kalamazoo River Superfund Site is an 80-mile-long stretch of river running from the Battle Creek area to Lake Michigan on the state's west coast. EPA

assumed responsibility for the site in 2002. It includes five disposal areas, six paper-mill properties, the Kalamazoo River, and Portage Creek, according to the agency's website.

Cleanup work is scheduled to begin in early April and continue through late fall or early winter, and will resume in spring 2008, EPA said. The agency said 20 to 30 loads of dredged material a day would be driven to a landfill in Kalamazoo.

In 2005, Weyerhaeuser Co. agreed to pay \$6.2 million to the EPA for cleanup on a separate portion of the site (4 DEN A-11, 1/6/05).

Part of Plainwell Dam to Be Removed

The agreement includes the removal of a portion of the Plainwell Dam, which DEQ spokesman Robert McCann said was responsible for the backup of contaminated water. The cleanup will be "a real partnership effort" among the companies, EPA, and DEQ, McCann told BNA. "We've known for a while this Plainwell Dam area is a real problem," he said.

The investigation planned in conjunction with the cleanup should point out some other major problems, McCann said. In the meantime, he said, "this is certainly the first significant step forward we've been able to take."

A number of paper mills along the river used to recycle carbon paper, and in the process discharged PCBs into the river and Portage Creek, said Sam Borries, on-scene coordinator for the EPA. "These mills are stretched along the river at various locations" covering the entire 80-mile stretch, he told BNA.

The Plainwell Dam is one of a series of dams, some of which date back 100 years, that trap sediment and toxic chemicals, Borries said. EPA is starting with the Plainwell site because it is the farthest upstream, he said. "The EPA will work and clean up the river system from upstream to downstream," he said.

As studies are conducted in coming years, Borries said, EPA will determine which locations are the most hazardous and who is responsible for cleaning them. "There's an ongoing effort to identify as many of these responsible parties as possible," and there is a "high probability" that future settlements will be announced, he said.

The agreements are the result of mediated discussions that began in 2004 and involved the companies, EPA, and several state agencies, EPA said. "Two-and-a-half years ago, the whole cleanup process on the Kalamazoo River was at a standstill," Borries said. Now, he said, "we have moved forward with the project."

More information about the Kalamazoo site, the agreements, and the planned work is available at <http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject/> . 

By Nora Macaluso